

## TESTIMONY

### Appropriations Committee

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a person with a psychiatric disability. I have a chronic illness and must be on medication for the rest of my life. I belong to a clubhouse, get services from DHMAS and have a Section 8 certificate. My income is SSD and is about \$1,000. a month. I live in Stamford.

I can only survive because I have income based housing. The average cost of an apartment in Stamford is \$1,300.00, which is more than my total income. There is a great need for income based housing in Fairfield County. Right now the Laurel House Clubhouse has a waiting list of 10 for people with a history of homelessness and another 20 who live in substandard housing. If people do not have the basics of housing they cannot begin to work on their recovery and start becoming more self sustaining. Hand to mouth living is so stressful that it has a psychiatric impact.

There are federal housing projects, but for the supported housing piece which integrates social services and psychiatric care with housing, the clubhouses need service dollars to hire support staff. This model has been shown to be cost effective and found to promote long term psychiatric stability.

The alternative is the shelter, which has a social cost and social impact. It means hospitalizations or warehousing people in the corrections system. It means repeat hospitalizations. Both of these systems are incredibly expensive.

Often people with psychiatric illnesses are not considered the "worthy poor" and no reason is seen to spend tax dollars on us. Mental illness is seen as some kind of moral defect and people are asked to pull them selves up by their bootstraps.

My point of view is that thank god that someone sees us as worthwhile human beings capable of making a social contribution and worth keeping alive. I am one of society's "defective people" and historically we have had to face eugenics which included starvation, incarceration, brutalization and sterilization.

Hopefully, Connecticut's legislators are more enlightened than this.

I am not asking for a handout, but a hand up. I am looking for work and have served with NAMI and the SWRMHB. I volunteer in the community and with church while looking for work. This would not be possible if I did not have stable housing and a support network.

Michelle Chase, J.D. 2/17/2010.